

Message Text

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ACTION AF-06

INFO OCT-01 EUR-12 ISO-00 SCCT-01 SSO-00 NSCE-00 CCO-00

OC-05 SY-05 CIAE-00 PM-04 H-02 INR-07 L-03 NSAE-00

NSC-05 PA-01 PRS-01 SP-02 SS-15 USIA-06 AID-05 PC-01

OPR-02 /084 W

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P 141254Z OCT 75

FM AMCONSUL ASMARA

TO SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 3634

INFO AMEMBASSY ADDIS ABABA PRIORITY

AMEMBASSY KHARTOUM PRIORITY

AMEMBASSY LONDON PRIORITY

AMEMBASSY MOGADISCIO PRIORITY

CINCUSNAVEUR LONDON PRIORITY

COMNAVTELCOM WASHDC PRIORITY

USCINCEUR VAIHINGEN PRIORITY

COMIDEASTFOR PRIORITY

NAVCOMMUNIT ASMARA PRIORITY

NAVCOMMSTA NEA MAKRI PRIORITY

CNO WASHDC PRIORITY

C O N F I D E N T I A L ASMARA 0872

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PINS ET

SUBJECT: ASMARA: THREE-WEEK PEACEFUL LULL SHATTERED

REF: ASMARA 0862

1. AFTER THREE WEEKS OF CALM IN AND AROUND ASMARA, LULL WAS SHATTERED AT ABOUT 0900 SUNDAY MORNING, OCT. 12, BY KILLING OF THREE AMHARAS, REPORTEDLY BY ELF ASSASSINS. VICTIMS WERE EPMG AIR FORCE OFFICER AND TWO RECENTLY ARRIVED AMHARIC OFFICERS OF COMMERCIAL BANK. THIS ATTACK PRECIPITATED BLUNT AND MENACING THREAT BROADCAST OVER RADIO ASMARA WHICH WAS FOLLOWED SHORTLY THEREAFTER BY
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VICIOUS EPMG RETALIATION SUNDAY AFTERNOON.

2. RADIO ASMARA BROADCAST WAS DIRECTED FIRST AT CIVILIAN POPULATION, ACCUSING THEM OF INGRATITUDE TO EPMG AND OF CONSISTENT SUPPORT FOR FRONT(ELF/PLF), CLAIMING THAT AS ERITREA HAD BENEFITED FROM A HIGH DEGREE OF DEVELOPMENT SUCH AS NEWSPAPERS, RADIO STATIONS, INDUSTRY, ETC. NOT FOUND IN OTHER PROVINCES, IT IS PARTICULARLY GALLING TO EPMG THAT ERITREANS HAVE SO READILY COLLABORATED WITH "BANDITS." BROADCAST THEN ASSURED POPULACE THAT EPMG WOULD TAKE WHATEVER STEPS NECESSARY TO MAINTAIN TERRITORIAL INTEGRITY OF ETHIOPIA EVEN IF IT MEANS SLAUGHTER OF ALL ERITREANS WHO SUPPORT REBELS. THE SECOND SEGMENT OF THE BROADCAST WAS HARANGUE AIMED AT EPMG MILITARY FORCES IN ASMARA. SUBSTANCE OF THIS DIATRIBE WAS THAT IT WAS TIME FOR EPMG MILITARY TO RETALIATE FOR THE KILLINGS OF AMHARA OFFICIALS AND OTHER INSURGENT ACTIONS AGAINST EPMG AUTHORITY. IN PARTICULAR BROADCAST ASKED SOLDIERS WHY THEY WERE STANDING AROUND WITH WEAPONS TO KILL BANDITS AND THEIR SUPPORTERS IN ERITREA. IF BROADCAST PICKED UP BY FBIS, REQUEST TEXT BE SENT TELEGRAPHICALLY SOONEST.

3. APPARENTLY SPARKED BY THIS BROADCAST, MEMBERS OF THE JOINT COMMAND (SEE REFTTEL) BEGAN AT 1645 LOCAL TO KILL AT RANDOM ASMARA RESIDENTS IN THREE AREAS IN EAST AND NE SECTION OF CITY. REPORTEDLY PROCEDURE WAS FOR JOINT COMMAND TO APPROACH CROWDED BAR, BURST IN AND OPEN FIRE WITH AUTOMATIC WEAPONS. THERE WERE THREE SUCH ATTACKS ON BARS AND SCATTERED SELECTED EXECUTIONS OF INDIVIDUALS IN GENERAL AREA WHERE MORNING ATTACK HAD TAKEN PLACE. TOTAL CASUALTIES REPORTEDLY ARE 31 KILLED AND 40 INJURED; ALL VICTIMS APPARENTLY ADULT MALES.

4. AS RESULT EPMG SECURITY FORCES ACTIONS DURING AFTERNOON, SUNDAY EVENING WAS TENSE, AND NIGHT WAS SHAKEN BY SPORADIC BURSTS OF FIRE FROM EDGY EPMG SENTRIES. THERE APPARENTLY WAS NO FRONT FIRING AT EPMG BASES. CONGEN HAS RECEIVED UNCONFIRMED REPORTS THAT ON EARLY MORNING OG OCT. 13, EPMG TROOPS EXECUTED 42 PRISONERS AT ETHIOPIAN ARMY DETENTION CENTER AT EXPO SITE. THOUGH THERE ARE SEVERAL SOURCES FOR THESE REPORTS, NONE CLAIM BODIES OF VICTIMS
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WERE ACTUALLY SEEN. ON MONDAY, ASMARA WAS QUIET WITH LESS-THAN-NORMAL ACTIVITY, AND STREET IN FRONT OF HOSPITAL WAS BLOCKED OFF BY POLICE. IN EXPECTATION OF FRONT REACTION TO EPMG ATROCITIES, WORD SPREAD RAPIDLY THROUGHOUT CITY IN AFTERNOON, REPORTEDLY CONFIRMED BY RADIO ASMARA BROADCAST, THAT OFFICIAL CURFEW HAD BEEN MOVED FORWARD FROM 1930 TO 1800 HOURS. RADIO ASMARA SUBSEQUENTLY ANNOUNCED CURFEW REMAINED 1930 TO 0500.

5. PRESENTLY ASMARA RESIDENTS ARE TORN BY STRONG RESENTMENT AT FRONT FOR ASSASSINATIONS WHICH RESULTED IN SUCH MASSIVE AND VICIOUS EPMG RETALIATION AND, EQUALLY, HEIGHTENED HATRED OF EPMG SECURITY FORCES FOR SUNDAY MASSACRE. RESIDENTS WIDELY EXPECT FRONT RETALIATION AGAINST ETHIOPIAN FORCES WITHIN THE NEXT FEW DAYS, AND ARE HOPEFUL THAT SUCH ACTION WOULD BE DIRECTED AGAINST EPMG FORCE OUTSIDE ASMARA SO AS NOT TO PROVOKE FURTHER EPMG REPRISALS IN CITY.

6. COMMENT: WHILE MAGNITUDE OF EPMG KILLINGS (ESPECIALLY IF REPORT OF EXPO EXECUTION PROVES ACCURATE) EXCEEDS ANY INCIDENTS SINCE FEB-MARCH FIGHTING, CONGEN IS MORE STRUCK BY OPENNESS OF EPMG THREAT (FOLLOWED BY BRUTAL EXAMPLE) TO ANNIHILATE ALL ERITREAN OPPONENTS, REAL OR IMAGINED. EPMG'S READY RELIANCE ON BRUTE FORCE IS INDICATIVE OF ITS UNWILLINGNESS OR INABILITY AT THIS TIME TO SEEK NON-VIOLENT ALTERNATIVES TO RETURN ERITREA TO ETHIOPIAN FOLD.
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